

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Justin Webb. I graduated from ACU with a BA in History in 2013, after initially attending 2003-2007. In the interim period, I married my lovely wife and we had twins. Needless to say, I came back to finish my degree with a vastly different perspective than when I had left, six years before. I had the privilege of enrolling in Dr. Kelly Elliott's Historical Methods class during my last undergraduate semester. As you consider Dr. Elliott's promotion to associate professor and tenure track, I strongly recommend that you approve this move. She is more than qualified by those measurable standards that one often lists on paper. In addition, Dr. Elliott possesses many key teaching qualities that may not be as tangible or easily defined, but which fulfill the ultimate goals of a good education.

As I stated above, I returned to ACU in 2013 to finish up my bachelor degree, after raising two toddlers alongside my wife and working a difficult job to support us. This formative time, it turned out, greatly altered my perspective in the classroom. No longer was I chiefly concerned with simply making good grades or memorizing the right sets of facts. I now saw that my education was a way for me to interpret the world (past, present, and future) in a new way, armed with the knowledge of how things came to be. And I was in control of that learning.

This change in thinking prepared me to enter Dr. Elliott's class with a great frame of mind to study historical methods, dealing mostly with the why and how of the historical profession. We learned many concepts and gained valuable tools in that class that will serve me well as I begin my graduate degree in history this fall. This alone would have been sufficient, for she imparted this knowledge to us in a very effective manner, making liberal use of both primary and secondary sources to explain these ideas in a way that we could clearly understand and grasp the necessary matter at hand. But I don't have to tell you that. A quick look at her CV or student course evaluations will show that Dr. Elliott possesses great ability to effectively guide university students through the study of history.

What stands out in my mind, even above and in addition to her stellar academic and pedagogic qualifications, is her ability to draw out the natural abilities of each and every student, in such a way that they walk away not only a better history student but a better learner, both in school and in life. Dr. Elliott continuously asked (and had us asking) "Why?". It was never sufficient to take things as they were; we investigated the reasons as to how these things (whether ideas or events) came to be, as well as the process involved. This is and will always be an incredibly valuable tool, whether studying in the classroom or studying the day's news.

Dr. Elliott has total faith that each and every one of her students has the potential to succeed. I did not go around asking all of my classmates about this; it was easy to see in the daily class time. My particular class was quite diverse. I was ten years older than the youngest student, and there was a great spread of economic, social, religious, and ethnic diversity. Therefore, the perspectives and particular abilities of each student differed quite a bit from one to the next. Dr. Elliott intentionally made sure that each of us was actively involved in each day's discussion and deliberation. I will admit that there were a couple students in that class whom I had written off as academically inferior. As the semester progressed in Dr. Elliott's Historical Methods class, I began to serve myself a piece of humble pie, as I watched these two students bloom under Dr. Elliott's tutelage. She delved deep to find their passions (along with

those of every other student) and used that to guide them (and us) through the course material, preparing us to create the culmination of our class, the research paper.

The research paper was discussed in detail at the beginning of the year, and we were expected to conduct a good deal of research over the entirety of the semester. After brainstorming a plethora of possible topics, Dr. Elliott helped me narrow my focus down to an appropriately specific topic. I spent many hours in the library and online, gathering much more information than I knew what to do with. I very much enjoyed getting to learn so much about an issue that I was so passionate about. But as Thanksgiving approached, I found myself with hundreds and hundreds of notecards and not a single word of my 12-15 page paper written out. I was approaching the realm of nervous breakdown as I came in to my required one-on-one meeting with Dr. Elliott to discuss the progress of the paper. I shared my dilemma with her, and I think she may have been surprised, but she still had faith that I could complete the assignment on time. I honestly don't remember the specifics of our discussion, but after meeting with her, I felt confident that my preparation through research would guide me to complete the necessary requirements for the research paper. And though I worked literally until the last minute, I turned in a paper that both showcased my natural abilities as an aspiring historian and a writer and turned out to be, hands down, the best paper I have ever written.

Now, I will admit, I have natural abilities with writing and learning. I am not trying to be boastful. I have had them for years. I burned out during my initial enrollment at ACU, and it took the middle years of gaining a family to even be able to come back to my love of learning. My time under the instruction of Dr. Elliott could not have occurred at a more perfect time, and her natural abilities as a teacher helped me to realize my full potential as a life-long learner. And even for those students who were not as enthralled with the concept of learning simply for learning's sake, she was equally able to pinpoint their passions and draw them out in such a way that each student gained new insight into their own abilities and soared higher.

"The ACU Difference" is a bit of a cliché around the Wildcat community. But any time I ever discuss my alma mater with someone, I tell them the ACU difference (at least one of them, and the most important in my book) is the professors. They are all highly qualified in their respective academic fields, and their excellence in this regard is on par with the biggest and most storied universities. But what sets our professors apart is that they care deeply about the whole progression of the student. You can walk into your professor's office and discuss problems with homework or problems with home life. In both arenas, the professors are deeply invested in helping their students. Dr. Elliott is no different. In fact, ACU gained a valuable asset upon hiring her. Dr. Elliott absolutely fulfills both the mission and the promise of Abilene Christian University. The work she does in and out of the classroom equips her students to better engage with and change the world we live in. She aids in refining the minds of her students to think critically about the past, present, and future. There is no doubt in my mind that Dr. Elliott is more than deserving of tenure track in the Department of History at ACU.